**2020 co-chairs report**

The global pandemic has had a dramatic effect on our park and for the foreseeable future, we may need to meet virtually, as for our 2020 AGM

The co-chairs have this year twice met physically with our Patron, Jeremy Corbyn MP. Last year’s threat from TfL of losing a sliver of our park down the whole east side appears to have subsided. Our more recent meeting included a number of police officers in connection with policing in the park. We hope that the council plans for CCTV, lighting and improved park entrances will still go forward.

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In 2020, the first effect of the Coronavirus on the Friends was the cancellation of a Walkabout and our scheduled general meeting on 23 March. We realised that holding a meeting in a confined space would be to take an unnecessary risk.

Since then, the impact of the pandemic has only continued.

The general lock-down of mid-March was accompanied with advice to Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives. However, the Government sensibly allowed parks to remain open for purpose of exercise. There was some controversy over this, with some advocating closure of all parks. A few local authorities closed their parks and then reopened them.

In Finsbury Park, cars were not allowed entry. We hope that with a few minor exceptions, this policy will be formalised and the park will become car-free.

In Haringey’s parks, playgrounds and exercise equipment were fenced off, but to the council’s credit, our parks were never closed.

It was always apparent from the Government ban on Mass Gatherings that the council’s six year policy of Major Events could not go ahead, but for many weeks, neither Live Nation nor the council would face up to that reality. We wrote to the Cabinet Member for parks on 30 April 2020 and one week later, Live Nation cancelled their scheduled Wireless 2020.

The c.40 acres that would normally have been walled off were now open to everyone. With the whole park available for public use and all commercial forms of entertainment and relaxation shut, our park saw a huge increase in use.

On some days during the summer, there may have been a thousands people in the park. This underlines the importance of having our park open to all.

Haringey Council have claimed to us that they are now in a position to consider events for 2021; we have recently written to them pointing out the unrealism of this. The heavy reliance on huge event income to fund our parks has been exposed as a misconceived policy and we believe it needs to be reviewed.

The unexpected fallow year, has allowed the ground to recover from years of hammering from Wireless and other Major Events.

This, plus the care and attention of park manager Tony Healey and his dedicated team has led to the park looking probably better than ever; is more used than ever and whose value has never been more appreciated by the residents of the three Boroughs. We look forward to this continuing.

What does 2021 hold?

The friend’s focus will be on the following:

1. Funding: Lobbying for sufficient funds to maintain Finsbury Park as an open, and excellent, public space
2. Safety: For improvements to safety, reducing crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the park (e.g. CCTV)
3. Improvements: To drive specific initiatives that improve the feel of the park (e.g. signage, improved entrances)
4. Promotion: To advertise the best that Finsbury Park has to offer, and promote the physical and mental events held within it
5. Members: Renewed focus on engagement with our members and park users, and seek to drive initiatives that respond to that.